



Smarden Pre-School Group

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY333457
Inspection date	21 November 2006
Inspector	Jenny Kane
Setting Address	Smarden CP School, Pluckley Road, Smarden, Ashford, Kent, TN27 8ND
Telephone number	07784553318
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Registered person	Smarden Pre -School Group
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Smarden Pre-School has been registered in the current premises since May 2006. A committee, made up of parents, manages it. The pre-school operates from a self-contained unit situated in the grounds of Smarden CP School in the village of Smarden. There is access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

A maximum of 20 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. It is open Monday to Friday from 09:00 to 15:00 term time only. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The group serves the local area and surrounding area.

There are currently 27 children on roll aged from two to four years. Of these, 15 children receive funding for early education. The group supports children with additional needs.

The pre-school employs nine staff who all work on a part-time basis. The two joint supervisors hold appropriate early years childcare qualifications.

The group receives support from the Local Authority, teaching staff from the school and the Pre-school Learning Alliance (PLA).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in clean and child-friendly premises. Staff sustain good levels of hygiene, helping to prevent the risk of cross infection and this promotes children's health and well-being. Children are developing an understanding of personal hygiene through care routines such as washing their hands before eating and after using the toilet.

Children who stay for the extended session either have a cooked meal, provided by the school, or bring a packed lunch. The lunch boxes are stored suitably in the fridge until lunchtime. The children go into the main school where they eat with the older children. This is beneficial for the three and four-year-olds as it introduces them to the school routine. Some of the packed lunches are not particularly nutritious. Parents are encouraged to provide nutritious food but this is reliant on parents' understanding of healthy eating.

Children are beginning to gain an understanding of what food is good for them by eating fruit at snack time. They sometimes walk to the local shop to buy filling for sandwiches, which they help to make up and eat. However, children often sit too long at snack times, do not regularly pour their own drinks or choose when they want to have a drink. Children enjoy making vegetable soup and are able to identify the vegetables. This activity gives children the opportunity to use their senses because they smell the vegetables both before and during cooking and taste the soup when it is cooked.

There are opportunities for physical play on a daily basis. Older children take part in weekly PE sessions in the school hall where they listen to instructions and work as a group. Children balance beanbags on their heads, crawl and move about while trying not to drop the bag. Although staff explain the activity they do not physically show the children what to do. As a result, children become disruptive and begin to bump into each other. When children have finished the activity, they line up and return to the pre-school where they change out of their shorts and t-shirts. This encourages independence and self-sufficiency.

Children enjoy playing outside in the school playground. They put on their own coats and boots and staff assist the younger children. Children help to take the bikes and cars into the play area where they ride about freely. Although staff supervise children closely when playing outside they do not specifically plan the activity. Children have fun with strips of crepe paper that they hold and let blow in the wind. However, staff do not extend this activity by discussing with the children what else can fly.

On occasions, children walk to the nearby play park. They make use of the large play equipment in the fenced off area. This gives the children the opportunity to climb, balance and to develop their physical skills. They also enjoy looking at nature and wildlife on these walks.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play in a well-maintained environment, which has a suitable amount of space available to move about safely. Staff take positive steps to ensure children's safety and to minimise risks. Appropriate safety precautions are in place such as keeping fire exits clear, a gate at the kitchen doorway prevents access and high handles avoid children opening the door. The premises are self-contained and used only for the pre-school. This means that the equipment and play areas are set out before children arrive.

A reasonable range of play equipment is available for the children, which are developmentally appropriate. However, due to limited storage in the room many of the resources are stored in the office. Consequently, this room is not currently in use. Children have choice and independence in selecting the equipment they play with. They help themselves from the shelves and cupboards around the play area. The routine and the layout of the room sometimes means that children do not have enough time to become involved in the activities before they regroup. For example, by clearing toys from the tables before snack, the lack of space where the computer is situated and that children cannot see into the guinea pig cage.

The supervisors are knowledgeable and have a commitment to safeguarding children's welfare. The pre-school has written procedures in place, which they share with the parents. However, the group are not clear about the recent changes to child protection procedures. In addition, none of the staff have attended recent training to update their awareness in this area.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children engage in conversations with staff about their interests and home experiences throughout the session and this means that they are happy and secure within the setting. They receive good adult support and there are positive and friendly relationships between themselves and the staff. Children relate well to each other and play cooperatively. For example, they work together in the garage area to see how to make the lift work. When playing with the dolls children help each other to put on the clothes and put the dolls into pushchairs saying "we're going shopping".

Children enjoy a reasonable range of activities, which support their developing needs. They have the freedom to select resources promoting independence. Children respond well when the staff offer ideas and join in play. In particular, the younger children benefit from being cared for in small groups and do well when staff work with them individually. For example, during construction play they fit together straws and with adult help manage to make a variety of shapes including flowers, snakes and butterflies. Children are proud to show off these. They also enjoy fitting together the popoids and make some interesting creations including,

unfortunately, guns. There is no attempt to discourage this activity; in fact, a member of staff suggests, "your gun needs a handle".

Children are quite self-assured, confidently talk to staff about their likes and make known their needs. A key worker system is in place, which works reasonably well in practice, but because all the staff work part-time there is some inconsistency. Daily chats and the use of contact books ensures parents receive information about their children's progress and care. However, the contact books are not updated on a daily basis and consequently some parents lose interest in looking at them. The supervisors plan to make changes to the way they record the development of the children under three. They are currently attending training in Birth to three matters, and when completed they hope to be more aware of how to put the framework into practice. Introducing the framework into the planning, observation and recording will be beneficial in providing a wider range of experiences to meet the needs of younger children.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Overall children are making steady progress across the six areas of learning.

Children are achieving well in personal, social and emotional development. They are developing self-care skills, for example dressing for PE, taking themselves to the toilet and selecting toys. However, there are limited opportunities to pour drinks at snack time. Children have a positive relationship with staff and their peers. They learn to work together by sharing toys and equipment and by taking turns.

Children's communication and language skills are effectively encouraged by staff. They communicate confidently and talk about themselves and experiences that happen to them. Children respond with enjoyment to books and stories, which helps with language development. They make good use of the quiet room where they sit, chat, and look at books in small groups. Children listen well during story time and the supervisor makes the story interesting by linking it to the weather when she reads 'A Windy Day'. They are beginning to recognise the written word and learn to identify familiar words such as their own names. There are limited opportunities for children to mark make and practise writing. The mark making area is not used to its full potential by the children. Although there is a supply of paper and pencils, additional tools such as pencil sharpeners, staplers and scissors are not readily available.

Mathematical skills are developing through some routines, for example, register and snack time. During a playdough activity, children discuss colour and shape. There are some missed opportunities throughout the session for staff to extend children's learning in this area. For example, when the children are cutting up vegetables to make soup they talk about size and shape but not about division or what happens when you cut something in half. Many of the resources are not readily available and as a result, children do not freely access mathematical equipment.

Children demonstrate their creativity through role-play and dressing up. They use their imagination as they act out their experiences and ideas. Children dress up as the bat and bee costumes and run about in character. "I'm a vampire, I've got wings". They laugh and squeal

as they chase each other. Each term a music teacher visits the pre-school to provide a structured music session for the children. Apart from this, children's musical experiences are limited. Musical instruments are in short supply and there is little evidence of dance or moving to music. Children join in singing familiar songs and rhymes. There are displays of children's craft and artwork on the walls. They enjoy helping to mix the paint and go freely to the easel to paint pictures. Children explore feel and texture during playdough and cooking activities. However, they do not fully express themselves during some creative activities, because the craft is often adult led.

The supervisors have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage, a good awareness of the curriculum guidance and a clear understanding of how children learn and progress. However, the less experienced staff need encouragement and guidance about how to put these into practice within the setting. Staff meet as a group to discuss the planning of the curriculum and one of the supervisors takes the lead in producing the written plan. There are long and short-term plans in place. However, these are in several different forms and are not clear regarding learning objectives, how activities meet children's individual needs and the use of observation and assessment to identify children's next steps in learning. As a result, although staff are enthusiastic, there are some missed opportunities for them to extend children's learning further.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

The pre-school fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Children are relaxed and happy. They receive plenty of individual attention; staff do not raise their voices and are consistent in their responses to the children. As a result, children are encouraged to make choices and express their personal preferences. This helps children to feel secure and feel valued.

Staff speak to parents on a regular basis to ensure they meet any particular needs or requirements. Children benefit from the profiles, which the staff and their parents complete when they start at the group. These help to provide consistency of care. The premises are user-friendly with good disabled access and toilet facilities. One of the supervisors has attended training and shares information with the rest of the staff team. This ensures she is confident to coordinate the care of any children attending who have additional needs.

Children's knowledge and understanding of the wider world is beginning to develop through participation in activities in the local community and celebrating festivals. Children regularly make choices about what they play with and self-selection of the toys is encouraged. However, the range of toys, which reflect diversity and positive images are very limited. Children have the opportunity to look at nature and living things on walks to the nearby park. Although there is a computer, it is not fully used and it is not in a favourable position. Also, there are limited resources for children to use programmable toys, to look at why things happen and discover how things work.

Staff use appropriate strategies which are effective in encouraging positive behaviour. They deal with incidents consistently and children receive explanation as to why some behaviour is

unacceptable. Because the staff ratios are high, children are busy and meaningfully occupied. As a result, their behaviour is generally good. Parents discuss any problems as they arise, which ensures staff provide continuity of care.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Children benefit from the positive and friendly relationships, which have developed between the staff and their parents. The committee has recently reviewed the written policies and procedures. They are about to be signed and adopted. However, the complaints policy lacks detail of the procedure to follow if parents have a complaint. The prospectus is in need of updating to reflect the changes to the provision. Parents state they are happy with the service provided by the setting. They come into the pre-school to discuss issues openly with staff regarding their children. This ensures they are fully involved with their children's care and development.

The parents of the children who receive funding for early education receive adequate written information about the provision's education. There is some information in the prospectus and on the notice board about the Foundation Stage and the six areas of learning. However, it would be beneficial to extend this to give parents further information about how the daily activities link into the curriculum. The supervisors are keen to share their knowledge further with the parents. They hold regular open-evenings where parents consult with staff regarding their children's educational progress. Staff track children's development by recording achievements in their individual folders. However, although these records are available to parents during consultations they are not encouraged to look at them freely. The further sharing of these will help parents become more involved at home with their children's learning and education.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The pre-school recently moved from its old premises in the nearby village hall to the current accommodation in the grounds of the school. This is the first inspection since the reorganisation and staff are in the process of deciding how to make the best use of the space and resources. They manage their time effectively and deploy themselves well, which ensures appropriate supervision of the children. Children benefit from members of staff who have worked together for several years and have a high regard to their well-being. However, although the group maintains high staff ratios, they do not meet the registration requirements for staff qualifications. The two supervisors hold level 3 childcare qualifications but their post is job-shared. Consequently, there is usually only one qualified member of staff present at each session.

All required mandatory documentation is in place and appropriately maintained. Children's records are secure, shared with parents and are readily available. Parents' views and comments are welcomed and positively encouraged. However, because the office is currently in use as a storeroom, there is no private space where parents can speak to staff confidentially.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The committee are responsible for the running of the pre-school. The chair of the committee has recently changed and the outgoing person offers good support to her replacement. The committee delegate responsibility to the two

supervisors for the day-to-day management and care of the children. They both demonstrate a good commitment to their self-development and attend training where possible. However, other staff should be encouraged to identify their training needs both as a group and in individual supervision sessions. In addition, the setting needs to be proactive regarding accessing suitable external courses and in providing in-house training.

The committee and the supervisors recognise the significance of identifying the group's strengths and areas for improvement. They also recognise the importance of monitoring the curriculum and the fact that they need to evaluate the activities more fully so that they link into the planning. The Early Years Advisory Teacher gives advice and support to the group and staff are open to new ideas and have a positive attitude to making changes and improvements. The provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- consider adopting a healthy eating policy to ensure children gain an understanding of healthy diet
- ensure staff access and attend safeguarding children training
- consider reorganisation of the space and resources to ensure a better flow of activities

- develop the use of Birth to three matters by using the framework to make observations and use them to identify and plan the next stage of children's development
- develop the range of resources which reflect diversity and positive images to increase children's awareness of the wider world
- expand and update the complaints policy to inform parents of the procedure to follow should they have a complaint
- update the prospectus to ensure they have sufficient information regarding the provision
- develop an action plan that sets out how at training and qualification requirements will be met
- introduce regular formal systems of supervision and appraisal for all staff

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- consider changing the arrangements for snack time to allow children more independence by enabling them to prepare their own food and pour their own drinks.
- develop the children's opportunities for outdoor physical play with regard to resources and planning
- continue to develop the planning and assessments to ensure they cover all the 6 areas of learning
- develop opportunities for children to use Information Technology, programmable toys and to find out how things work
- consider ways to further involve parents in the Foundation Stage records so that they can support children's learning at home

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